

Message Text

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 7205

E. O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE, UR, SY

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR

REF: MOSCOW 6875

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN MINISTER ABOUHAMAD RAISED WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR LAST WEEK ISSUES OF INFILTRATION OF ARMS ACROSS LEBANESE BORDER, SYRIA'S CLOSURE OF FRONTIER AND SYRIA'S GENERALLY UNHELPFULNESS RE LEBANON'S CURRENT PROBLEMS. SOVIET AMBASSADOR, OTHER THAN MAKING ISSUE OF LEBANESE ARMS PURCHASES FROM THE US, MADE NO RESPONSE OTHER THAN EXPRESSING WILLINGNESS TO SEEK INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS GOVERNMENT.

2. SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INFORMED ME THAT FOREIGN MINISTER ABOUHAMAD CALLED IN RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR SARVAR AZIMOV LAST WEEK. THE ESSENCE OF THE CONVERSATION, ACCORDING TO SADAKA, WAS AS FOLLOWS.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER THANKED THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR FOR RUSSIAN ASSISTANCE IN CALMING THE SITUATION DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING BETWEEN LEBANESE ARMY AND FEDAYEEN. ABOUHAMAD NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SITUATION WAS STILL UNCERTAIN AND HOPED THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD CONTINUE URGE

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MODERATION ON ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. HE EMPASIZED THAT

CONSIDERABLE QUANTITIES OF LIGHT AND HEAVY ARMS WERE BEING INFILTRATED ACROSS THE SYRIAN BORDER FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES. THIS WAS A MATTER OF DEEP CONCERN TO THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. FURTHERMORE, THE SYRIANS IN GENERAL WERE NOT BEING HELPFUL IN EASING THE CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON. THESE DEVELOPMENTS COULD SET UP A NEW ROUND OF FIGHTING WHICH WAS NE THER IN THE INTEREST OF LEBANON NOR THAT OF THE SOVIET UNION. HE CONSEQUENTLY HOPED THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT WOULD DO WHAT THEY COULD WITH THE SYRIANS AND WITH OTHER SOURCES OF INFILTRATED ARMS IN ORDER TO HELP RESTORE A MORE STABLE SITUATION HERE.

4. IN REPLY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT THE RESISTANCE WERE TELLING HIM THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS ORDERING ARMS TO BE USED TO LIQUIDATE THE MOVEMENT. ABOUHAMAD CONFIRMED THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WAS ENDEAVORING TO PURCHASE ARMS BUT DENIED THAT ITS PURPOSE WAS TO LIQUIDATE THE FEDAYEEN. HE REMINDED THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR THAT BOTH FEDAYEEN AND OTHERS HAD URGED THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO EQUIP THE ARMY SO THAT IT WOULD BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO DEFEND IT AGAINST ISRAELI ATTACKS. THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR ADMITTED THIS BUT SAID THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WAS PURCHASING ARMS FROM THE U. S. ABOUHAMAD SAID HE DID NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THE ARMS WOULD BE PURCHASED BUT INDICATED THAT THEY WERE EXAMINING A NUMBER OF SOURCES, INCLUDING THE US. HE MADE CLEAR HOWEVER THAT THE GOL WOULD PURCHASE ARMS WHERE IT WANTED AND ASKED THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR WHY THEY SHOULDN' T. SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT AND JORDAN WERE PURCHASING ARMS FROM THE US WHILE SYRIA, IRAQ AND UAR WERE PURCHASING FROM THE SOVIET UNION. LEBANON HAD ALSO PURCHASED EQUIPMENT FROM THE SOVIET UNION. DIDN' T A SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PURCHASE ARMS WHERE IT WANTED? THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR MADE NO RESPONSE.

5. AT THAT POINT ABOUHAMAD RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE SRYIAN CLOSURE OF ITS FRONTIER WITH LEBANON WHICH HE MAINTAINED SHOULD BE A MATTER OF CONCERN TO THE SOVIET UNION. ABOUHAMAD CLAIMED THAT THE SYRIANS WERE VIOLATING GENERALLY
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ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES GOVERNING INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE. THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT WAS NOT ONLY PROHIBITING LEBANESE GOODS BUT ALL GOODS INCLUDING SOVIET PRODUCTS TO ENTER SYRIA OR TRANSIT TO EASTERN DESTINATIONS. THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE MATTER.

6. COMMENT. WE HAVE REPEATEDLY URGED THE GOL TO RAISE SUCH ISSUES WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HERE TO SUPPLEMENT OUR OWN DISCUSSIONS IN MOSCOW. THE GOL HAS HAD SOME RELUCTANCE IN DOING SO BECAUSE OF DISTRUST OF AZIMOV. ACCORDING TO SADAKA, HE HAS MISREPRESENTED FACTS ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS. SADAKA NOTED THAT FORMER PRIME MINISTER SAAB SALAAM HAD HAD SIMILAR EXPERIENCES IN HIS RELATIONS WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND HAD REFERRED TO AZIMOV IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN OFFICE AS A " LIAR." HOUGHTON

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